CHANGING
MY
PAST

Changing My Past by Brown Eyes Parker

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Summary: Michael Wheeler left his long-time girlfriend Eleven Hopper behind to go to medical school in Boston. 5 years later, he's going to get a glimpse of what his life would look like if he came back.

1. Chapter 1

Chapter 1

"Remember what we said? You'd come home someday and it would be forever and we'd be a family." Eleven asked Mike on the rare occasion he had come for Thanksgiving, they were standing in a crowded airport and he was getting ready to go back to Tufts University.

"I told you it was going to be a while," Mike answered, adjusting his carry-on bag. "I want to be able to support you, to give you the kind of life you've never had. Don't you want to be the wife of Dr. Michael Wheeler?"

"I like the life we've lived just fine, thank you. You can't buy happiness and I've always been happy with you," Eleven said. "I know you've worked hard to get your degree but the letters M.D are just initials. Why don't you just stay here? We can get married and start our lives together. And if you're not really going to be happy until you're a doctor then take me with you."

"I-I still have to do my residency," Mike replied. "I haven't even graduated yet, Eleven. If you came with me, we'd never see each other."

"We never see each other *now*," Eleven reminded him. "I just want to be with you. I want to see your face first thing in the morning and the last thing I see before I shut out the light. I want my kids to have your freckles. "I have no idea what this life is going to look like but I know it has the both of us in it and I choose us."

"I'll be back," Mike soothed, shattering her dreams and hopes when she realized he was leaving her behind.

His flight was boarding, so he leaned in to kiss her goodbye, wishing he could convey to her why she couldn't go with him. Their life together would be far from the idyllic childhood they had led in Hawkins. He knew the reality of what she was asking him, he'd seen too many medical school relationships end badly. He couldn't

imagine them splintering apart like so many of the other couples he knew.

He didn't want that to be their fate.

"We're not like other people," Eleven told him, reading his thoughts like she had the uncanny ability to do. Making one last ditch effort for him to take her along.

Mike nodded. "Of course not. But that doesn't mean we can't become like them one day," he said.

Eleven knew arguing would be pointless, he wasn't going to cave even though she usually had him wrapped around her little finger. She would have to take no for an answer this time around. There was one last call for his flight and they didn't have time to fight anymore. He kissed her one more time and then he was gone, leaving Eleven all alone with the sinking feeling that she would never see him again.

He felt it too but he did his best to ignore it. Because if he thought about it too long, he would turn around and stay forever or ask her to go with him. And it wouldn't be fair to either of them, so he walked away in spite of himself.

He walked away and he didn't look back and he pretended it was easy.

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"Do you got any family, Dr. Wheeler?"

Mike looked up from the chart he was filling out and at his patient, a little African-American boy named Campbell. He had large brown eyes and gap-teeth and was recovering from emergency appendix surgery.

"Everybody's got family, Campbell," he answered as he jotted down a few more notes.

"Are you gonna see them for Christmas?" Campbell asked, hitting the mute button on the television and looking at him expectantly.

"Not this year buddy," Mike replied. "They're all back in Indiana. I was too busy to go and see them. Maybe next year though."

"Do you got a wife?" Campbell inquired innocently.

For a split second, Eleven flitted across his mind along with a myriad of *what ifs* and *could have beens*. But she was his past, better to leave it buried where it belonged. He'd made his choices, it was best to stick with them. No regrets.

"I'm not married," Mike said. "And before you ask, I don't have any kids either."

"Why not?"

"I was too busy to get married and have kids," Mike answered. "You'll understand one day when you're a lot older."

"Aren't you lonely?" Campbell asked. "Without a wife or kids to keep you company?"

"I'm not *that* lonely, I get to interact with kids like you on a daily basis."

"You don't get to go home to somebody who loves you at the end of the night," Campbell told him.

"That is true," Mike agreed, allowing himself to wonder what Eleven was doing just for a second. If she had moved on and if *she* had a family.

"Are you going to?"

"Going to what?" Mike asked.

"Get married and have kids?"

Mike shook his head. "I don't know, Campbell. I barely have time to take care of myself, never mind other people."

Campbell sighed. "It seems like a sad kind of life."

Mike laughed. "How did you get to be so smart?"

Campbell grinned. "God!"

"Oh, of course! Why didn't I think of that!?" Mike slapped his forehead and then put Campbell's chart back at the end of his hospital bed.

Campbell quickly switched gears. "Do you think Santa Claus will be able to find me here, Dr. Wheeler?"

"I think he'll be able to find you anywhere," Mike said, sitting down and pulling a deck of cards out of his scrubs. "How about a quick round of UNO before I clock out for the night?"

"You don't got other patients to see?"

"Nope. You were the last one on my rotation," Mike assured him. "I told your parents I would entertain you while they went to get something to eat. I think the cafeteria is having a special on Spam today."

Campbell dissolved into a fit of laughter as Mike dealt out seven cards for each of them.

Before Mike knew what was happening, an hour had flown by and Campbell's dad and mom were ushering him out of the room as they said he *must* have somewhere better to be than with their son, it being Christmas Eve and all.

Mike didn't have the heart to tell them that he didn't have anywhere to go. They were spending the holidays at Children's Hospital. He didn't need to make things gloomier for them by letting them know he was going to be all alone.

He wished them a Merry Christmas, gave Campbell a high-five then went to clock out before going to the men's locker room to put his boots and winter coat on.

Evelyn Thompson, one of the nurses doing her residence, was waiting for him when he got there. She'd been chasing him since the first day she had started working with him. So far, he'd been able to resist her

wiles. He was sure tonight would be no exception, despite her plunging neckline and wine-stained lips.

"Hello Michael," she cooed.

"Evelyn," he acknowledged.

She smiled at him and played with the gold-plated choker she was wearing. "Do you have plans for tonight?"

"I do, in fact!" Mike replied cheerfully. "I'm going to go home and make some popcorn, pour myself a beer and watch *It's A Wonderful Life* on NBC."

He could hear Evelyn's breath hitch as she raised her chest slightly so he had an ample view of her cleavage.

"Do you want some company? I don't have to be at my parents' house in Rhode Island until the morning. I wouldn't mind—"

"Thanks for the offer but I'd rather be alone, if you don't mind!" Mike said quickly.

"Oh come on, nobody wants to be alone on Christmas Eve!" Evelyn protested.

"I'm sure you won't be alone," Mike replied, thinking about Brett Ratner, the other doctor who she pursued shamelessly and sometimes spent the night with.

Evelyn lowered her gaze demurely. "Of course! But I know you'd be by yourself and I hated the thought of that."

"I'll be okay," Mike promised. "I like being alone."

She frowned, her attitude doing a complete 180 when she saw her seduction tactics weren't going to work on him. "Oh knock it off! Nobody likes being alone!"

"I do!" Mike insisted. "If you haven't noticed yet, I spend a lot of my time by myself."

Evelyn gave him a cool look. "Who broke your heart, Dr. Wheeler?" she asked cruelly.

Mike slammed his locker door shut and pulled a hat over his unruly dark hair, annoyed with the blonde beauty standing in front of him. "Don't judge a book by its cover," he retorted, stalking off from her.

Evelyn watched him go, pouting at him as he left. But he would not be moved. He'd made his decisions a long time ago he was going to live with them even if it meant spending another Christmas Eve all by himself.

TBC. . .

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Author's Note:

Well, here's the first (much) anticipated chapter of my Mike & Eleven Christmas story. I hope it doesn't disappoint you! I am looking forward to your feedback and sharing this with you. Please feel free to leave comments!

Until Next Time!

Lots of Love,

Holly, 12/3/2016

2. Chapter 2

Chapter 2

He stopped by a convenience store to pick up a six pack of Budweiser to go with whatever leftovers he had in the fridge and a pint of eggnog, his one little holiday indulgence because he forewent a tree and Christmas gifts, except for the ones his mom insisted on sending him.

He tried to ignore the weight that had settled around his chest cavity. It was heavier than usual. He missed Eleven so much it physically hurt to even think about it.

He sighed and shook his head as he went up to the counter to pay for his purchases. He handed the girl more money than he owed and told her to keep the change. She smiled at him, her whole face lighting up like a Christmas tree.

"Thank you! Thank you *so* much!" she said over and over again. "Merry Christmas!"

"Merry Christmas," Mike returned half-heartedly, not quite matching the width of her smile.

He stepped outside and zipped up his coat. It had started to snow during his brief detour into the 7-11. Somehow the Boston air had gotten even colder. He quickened his pace, wishing that he had a car but grateful his apartment wasn't too far away from the hospital.

He made it home just as it started to snow heavily. He checked his messages as he took his coat off and shook it out. There were half-a-dozen of them, all merry and bright.

"*Hiiii* Mike! It's me Holly! Your little sister, in case you've forgotten! I'm just calling to wish you a Merry Christmas Eve! I wish you were home! I miss you so much! Nancy and Steve are here and Mom's making every kind of pie imaginable. . ." Holly rambled on for 30 seconds about pie and Jean-Ralphio before the phone beeped. The next two messages were from her, a continuation of her previous

conversation. "Mom says I need to hang up now since I'm just talking to the machine and not to you! I'll talk to you soon! Love you!"

The other three messages were from the rest of the gang. There was a shared message from Dustin and Max, both giggling as they wished him Happy Holidays in unison. Then there was a standard greeting from Lucas, short and to the point with a suggestion they catch up after the New Year because he'd be in Boston for a conference.

He expected the last message to be from Will.

Instead Eleven's soft voice came over the machine. "Hello Mike, it's me—"

He slammed his finger down on the stop button, her voice cutting off mid-sentence. He hovered over the delete button for a second before he decided to keep it just in case he *wanted* to listen to it later on.

He turned the television on and flipped to NBC. He'd missed the beginning of the movie and it was on the scene where Jimmy Stewart was asking Donna Reed what she wanted.

"*What is it you want Mary? What do you want? You want the moon? Just say the word and I'll throw a lasso around it and pull it down. . . say that's a pretty good idea! I'll give you the moon, Mary."*

"*I'll take it! Then what?"*

"*Well then you could swallow it and it would all dissolve, see? And the moonbeams would shoot out of your fingers and your toes and the ends of your hair—"*

Mike put the beer and eggnog away, suddenly not very much in the mood to drink or eat anything even though he hadn't had food since his wilted salad and a warm Coke at lunchtime.

"Snap out of it Wheeler!" He said aloud. "She's just a girl from your past. Just a girl you knew a long time ago."

But that wasn't true. It hadn't been that long ago and she hadn't been just any girl. He stared into the refrigerator at nothing before shaking his head and shutting the door. He settled into the worn out La-Z-Boy

and tried his hardest to focus on the movie. But his thoughts were moving increasingly farther and farther away from Boston and the now of his life.

By movie's end, there was a happy ending for George Bailey and Co. and Mike was half asleep, feeling more than disconcerted and unhappy as he made his way to his room and stumbled into bed without brushing his teeth or changing into his pajamas.

As he drifted off to sleep, he hoped things would feel better in the morning.

TBC. . .

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Author's Note:

Apologizes for the brevity of this chapter, I'll make up for it next week!

3. Chapter 3

Disclaimer: I own nothing.

Thank you for all the reviews.

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Chapter 3

"*He's gone 2000 miles, it's very far, the snow is falling down. It's colder day by day, I miss you. The children will sing he'll be back at Christmastime! In these frozen and silent nights you sometimes appear. Outside under the purple sky, diamonds in the snow sparkle. Our hearts were singing. It felt like Christmastime—*"

Someone was singing off-key in the other room, an old song he hadn't heard in years. It was one of Will's favorite songs back in the day and he played it on repeat. Mike frowned and sat up, stretching his tired muscles as he wondered if somebody had broken into his apartment.

He threw his blankets off and tumbled out of the bedroom, completely unaware of his surroundings. It didn't hit him until he hit the stairs. He wasn't in his apartment in Boston anymore somehow he had gotten back to his childhood home in Hawkins.

"Wake up!" he told himself, pinching his arm. "Wake up!"

He heard laughter and then Eleven was standing in front of him, wearing a medical school t-shirt that had once belonged to him and baggy plaid pajama bottoms.

"Talking to yourself again, Mike?"

"What are *you* doing here!?" Mike asked abruptly.

Eleven laughed again and started to stir whatever was in the bowl she was holding. "We live here, remember? Your parents gave us this house when they downsized a couple of years ago. Wow you must have had a lot to drink last night!"

"What? I didn't drink anything last night!" Mike answered. "What are you doing here anyways?"

Eleven's smile faded and started back for the kitchen, throwing him a look. "I don't like this game very much!" she informed him.

"I'm not playing a game!" Mike replied, going after her. "We haven't seen each other in years. I left you in an airport years ago! I'm a resident at Children's Hospital in Boston, we don't talk anymore. I'm not supposed to be here!"

Eleven shook her head. "You're too young to be having a midlife-crisis."

"This is not a midlife-crisis, Eleven! I am seriously not supposed to be here!"

"I don't have time for this," Eleven said. "We still have to eat breakfast and open gifts before our families get here. I'd appreciate it if you'd settle down! We'll deal with whatever's bothering you after Christmas is over."

Mike turned to go and shook his head. "No. No. *No*."

"Where are you going?" Eleven called after him as he left. "Mike! Come back, we'll deal with this now if we have to! I'm sorry!"

But it was too late, he'd already put on his coat and was going outside, car keys in hand. He needed to make sense of what was going on because nothing was making sense. He drove around aimlessly until he saw Dustin standing in the middle of the road.

He pulled to a stop and rolled down the window.

"Michael Wheeler! What are you doing?" Dustin asked. "Its Christmas morning and your wife is at home waiting for you to open presents with her."

"*Wife?"* Mike repeated. "I don't know what you're talking about! Eleven and I never got married! I broke off our engagement years ago because I couldn't be what she wanted. Don't you remember? It almost destroyed our friendships until she told you all to stop treating

me like dirt."

Dustin shook his head. "You never broke off your engagement with her, Mike! You never even thought about it once. You've loved this girl since you were 12-years-old. You told me on the day you two got married that you couldn't imagine your life without her."

"I never said that!" Mike protested.

Dustin nodded. "Right, okay. How much did you drink at the Christmas Eve party last night anyways?"

"I didn't drink *anything*!" Mike retorted.

"Yeah I know you're not supposed to be drinking anything because of El right now but Lucas laced the punch and I could have sworn I saw you drinking it all night!" Dustin answered.

"Don't you think I would have known if I was drinking laced punch?" Mike asked, having trouble believing he was having this conversation with one of his best friends. "And what do you mean I'm not drinking because of El? Is she pregnant or something?"

"Is she? You two have been trying for a while now," Dustin replied. "Hey! Maybe that's her big announcement this afternoon! We're going to have to pretend to be surprised when she tells us—"

Mike shook his head. "I'm pretty sure Eleven isn't pregnant."

"How do you know?" Dustin challenged.

Mike opened his mouth to explain the mechanics of sex and pregnancy when Dustin's front door open and a tall red-head came outside, dashing down the snowy driveway in spite of her swollen belly.

"You found him!" she said, wrapping her arm around Dustin and frowning. "Eleven's been worried sick, Mike! You better go home before she calls the police."

Mike rolled his eyes. "Well, she obviously knows I'm here, Max."

Max huffed. "It's Christmas and you're disrupting our morning. We have two kids inside who are dying to open their gifts. So, get your crap together and go home to your wife, Wheeler!"

"She's *not* my wife!" Mike said.

"Dustin, go inside and get the wedding picture!" Max ordered.

"Okay honey!" Dustin answered, hurrying back into the house.

A few seconds later, he returned and shoved a picture frame into Mike's hands.

"Here's all the proof you need," Max said, putting her hands on her hips and looking at him crossly.

It was indeed Mike and Eleven on their wedding day, she was wearing a white party dress and he was wearing khakis and a white, long-sleeved button down. They were surrounded by Lucas, Max, Dustin and Will.

He looked happier than he had felt in years.

Mike sighed and scrubbed at his face. "You guys just don't understand."

"*Mommmmmmy!"* a little girl wailed from the door.

"Hold on a minute sweetie! Mommy and daddy are dealing with Uncle Mike! We'll open gifts soon, I promise!" Max replied. "Wheeler, my kids are waiting for us. Go home to Eleven and pretend you're doing alright for now. Okay?"

Mike sighed.

"You better do what Max says," Dustin told him. "We both know what she looks like pregnant and angry."

Max punched him in the arm but it was more playful than a display of anger. *"Dustin!"*

Dustin kissed her on the cheek and beamed at her before turning

back to his friend. "We'll see you for dessert later. Just try and act normal until tomorrow."

Mike sighed and watched as the Hendersons went back into their house before reluctantly driving back home.

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Author's Note:

I told you I'd be back today! I hope you enjoyed this chapter. I know I'm a troll and dragging it out but it'll be worth it, I promise. Please drop a review if you feel like it. I'll be back next week.

Until Next Time!

Love,

Holly, 12/10/2016

4. Chapter 4

Chapter 4

When he got home, he crept inside uncertainly. Eleven was sitting on the couch, still dressed in her pajamas and watching the door anxiously. Her large brown eyes filled with relief when she saw him come in.

She jumped up and came over to greet him, putting her arms around his neck. "Mike! Mike, I am so sorry about earlier! Something was bothering you and I didn't listen. We're always able to talk to each other. Why don't you tell me what's wrong now?"

Mike shook his head and sighed, holding her at arm's length. He would pretend he knew what was going on for a little bit. "We'll talk about it later, okay? Do you want to have breakfast or open presents first?"

"Oh, um, about breakfast. . . I kind of burned it. I guess I'm still just as useless as I was when I was younger when I'm upset. At least I didn't snap anybody's neck this time though."

Mike smiled weakly at her attempt at a joke. "Well then, should we open our gifts?"

"We don't have much time. Your mother called and said they'd all be here in a little bit earlier than we planned but Holly's excited to give us the presents she picked out for us. She can't wait any longer. So, maybe we should just get dressed and wait until later."

Mike nodded. "Okay," he agreed, waiting a second before following her upstairs.

He watched her from the doorway for a second she was singing another Christmas song while she took her t-shirt off. He averted his gaze when he realized she wasn't wearing a bra.

She stopped mid-*Santa Baby* and laughed when she realized what was going on. "Are you ever going to stop being embarrassed when you

see me naked, Mike?"

Mike swallowed. "Are you going to get dressed?"

"Are you going to get dressed?" Eleven answered, giggling some more as she put on a bra and a black slip. "Better go for jeans, Holly bought you an ugly sweater and you know she's going to want to wear it."

"Ugly sweater?"

"Your brother and sister tradition," Eleven reminded him, as she pulled on a wine-colored, velour dress and then a pair of black tights.

"Right," Mike said, coming into their room and finding a pair of jeans as she brushed out her pixie cut and tied a black ribbon in her hair in place of a headband.

"How do I look?" Eleven asked as she added snowmen earrings to complete the look.

"You look nice," Mike answered absentmindedly. "Are these clean?"

Eleven's face fell. "I just look nice?"

"You look pretty," Mike replied. "Are my jeans clean?"

Eleven sighed with disappointment as she found her shoes and slipped them on, buckling the straps. "Yeah I just did the laundry yesterday."

"What?" Mike asked when he realized she was looking at him.

She sighed again, deeper than before but didn't tell him what was bothering her. "Nothing. Everything's okay. I'm going to put the ham in the oven, it's going to take a while to cook and I want your mother to entrust me with Christmas dinner again one day."

Mike got the distinct feeling he had done something wrong, something the other Mike Wheeler would have never done. He pinched his arm again, willing himself to wake up from the bizarre alternate universe he was trapped in.

"*Wake up! Wake up! Wake up Wheeler!"* He said over and over again, pinching himself harder than before. But he was still in his parents' room and the doorbell was ringing.

"Mike, honey!" Eleven called. "Could you come and answer the door, please?"

"Sure," Mike answered, wondering why his parents didn't just come in. It *had* been their house once they didn't need him to invite them inside.

"Mike!" Eleven called again.

Mike got dressed as quickly as possible and then hurried down the stairs to let his family in. Literally everybody had already gotten there, Joyce and Hopper included.

"Merry Christmas!" Joyce and Karen chorused together, their arms around each other as they beamed up at him.

Mike waved. "Hi," he replied.

Hopper frowned. "What's wrong?"

"Did you have too much to drink last night?" Ted added.

"No! Why does everybody keep asking me that?"

Joyce rolled her eyes as they all filed into the house. "Oh will you two leave him alone? They were probably awake early. You know the two of them are about Christmas!"

"Exactly," Hopper said. "He's not his usual cheery self. There's something going on, Joyce!"

"We're fine dad!" Eleven replied loudly. "Mike's just feeling a little under the weather. I think he got some bad cheese or something. He'll be fine in a little bit though. Right honey?"

"Right!" Mike answered, forcing himself to smile. "Don't worry about me!"

"Can we open presents now!?" Holly asked loudly as she shoved a package into Mike's hands. "You need to put on your sweater so we can take pictures to add to the scrapbook. It's our tradition!"

"I know," Mike answered, tearing off the paper and lifting the lid of the garment box.

The sweater was hideous, navy blue with Rudolph stitched on it. His nose was a huge red pom-pom. It was something he would never be caught dead in, even his scrubs weren't that tacky.

"*Put it on!"* Holly demanded.

"Okay! Okay!" Mike replied, pulling it over his head. "Well, what do you think?"

"It's perfect!" Eleven said, smiling at him from the kitchen threshold. "Just the thing you need to lift your spirits, I'd say!"

Mike was sure his spirits wouldn't be lifted, but he knew better than to say anything from the way that Hopper was looking at him. If he hurt Eleven's feelings any more than he probably already had, there would be hell to pay.

So, he went through all the motions and pretended that his mood had improved as the day went on. But he knew it was all pretend, that he would wake up the next day and it would all be a dream. He'd be back in his apartment by himself, getting ready to face a *real* Christmas all alone while he felt slightly disappointed his vivid dream wasn't his reality.

TBC. . .

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Author's Note:

5. Chapter 5

Disclaimer: I own nothing.

Rated: T

Thank you again for your support.

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Chapter 5

He woke up with a warm body pressed up against him, one long leg draped over his and gentle breathing in his ear. He shifted slightly but his bed partner wrapped their arms around him a little tighter.

"Five more minutes, Mike. Okay? Dustin's dropping the kids off because he has to take Max to the doctors for an ultrasound."

His heart stopped beating.

Somehow he was still in a world where eleven was part of his life. It couldn't be possible, he had just been dreaming because he'd been thinking about her a lot on Christmas Eve. There was no way. . .

He pinched himself again.

He was wide awake.

"Is everything okay?" Eleven asked, opening her eyes to look at him.

"Everything's fine," Mike answered hastily. "I just had a very. . . unsettling dream."

"A nightmare?"

"Not a nightmare," Mike replied. "Just. . ."

"Friends don't lie," Eleven reminded him.

Mike smiled at the familiar phrase. "You still say that?"

"Always," Eleven said, moving closer to him. "What did you dream about, Mike? I want to help."

Mike was groping for lies when the doorbell rang. "Are you going to get that?"

"It's probably Dustin and Max," Eleven answered, sighing as she untangled herself from Mike. "They're earlier than they said they'd be. I'll go down and get it, try and get some sleep. Okay?"

"I don't have to go to work today?"

Eleven laughed as she pulled on a community college sweatshirt and jeans. "You're on Christmas break, Mike."

"Christmas break?"

"You took over for Mr. Clarke at the middle school," Eleven answered. "Are we still really playing this game where you pretend not to know what's going on?"

"I'm just teasing you," Mike fibbed. "Of course I remember taking over for Mr. Clarke at the middle school. I'm not just sure I'm qualified for the job. . ."

Eleven laughed some more and pulled her socks on. "Stop being funny Mike! Of course you're qualified!"

"What do you mean? Didn't I go to med school?"

"We'll talk about this later," Eleven said. "I can't just leave the Henderson's on the porch while I deal with your midlife crisis."

Mike decided he couldn't stay in bed while he had so many questions about *this* life plaguing him. So, he got up and took a shower and got dressed. When he went downstairs, Eleven had the kids around the table eating Lucky Charms.

"Uncle Mike!" Dustin's exact look alike shouted when she saw him come in.

"Leia, shhh! Uncle Mike isn't feeling well today!" Eleven chided. "He

didn't sleep that well last night."

"He wasn't feeling good yesterday either," Leia pointed out, narrowing her eyes at him.

"What?" Mike asked.

"Nothing," Leia answered, looking at him suspiciously. "Are you *weally* my Uncle Mike? Or did aliens kidnap him and weplace him with you?"

"Don't listen to her, Mike. Max said that Dustin's let her watch too many old alien movies lately. She thinks everyone is from outer-space at this point," Eleven told him as she poured him a bowl of frosted Mini-Wheats.

Mike shook his head. "It's okay. Kids are bound to have an active imagination. You didn't know me when I was 5."

"I'm 6," Leia retorted, frowning. "My birfday party was last week, *'member*?"

"Oh, right!" Mike answered. "I was just kidding."

Leia made a face and looked at Eleven. "Are you sure this is Uncle Mike?"

Eleven grinned. "Listen Le, I've known this guy since I was 12-years-old. I know him inside and out, forward and backwards. I know his heart, I'm pretty sure this is Uncle Mike. He's just in a silly mood today. But he's going to cool it. Right, Mike?"

"Right!" Mike agreed, feigning enthusiasm as he lifted a spoonful of cereal to her.

"Uncle Mike, say something nice about Auntie El now," Leia ordered.

"So much pressure," Mike said lamely.

He could see the disappointment in Eleven's eyes when he didn't come up with something right away.

"It's okay Mike," Eleven replied after a beat. "If you can't think of anything, you don't have to say it."

"Uncle Mike *always* says something 'romantic," Leia informed him, knowing by her childlike instincts he didn't belong there.

"I was probably good at it once a long time ago, but I am horribly out of practice now," Mike said quietly so Eleven wouldn't hear him because he still never wanted to hurt her feelings, no matter what universe he lived in.

"You'll get the hang of it," Leia assured him.

Mike was not sure he would but he nodded anyways, because he didn't want to contend with Dustin or Max if Leia ran home and told them about imaginary marriage problems.

"Max wondered if we'd take the girls to the mall," Eleven said. "Leia got a gift certificate to Toys 'R Us and she's *dying* to spend it."

"Do I have to go?" Mike asked.

"Mike, you promised we'd spend Christmas vacation together!" Eleven replied giving him the puppy dog eyes that would have made him follow her to the ends of the earth if she would have asked him to.

Mike frowned. "You're right. I probably *did* say that—"

Eleven sighed. "You're going to say *but* aren't you?"

"What? No, I was just going to ask you what time you wanted to leave," Mike answered, even though he had been going to say *but*.

"As soon as Leia and Annie are done with their breakfast," Eleven replied. "We'll do the dishes after we drop the girls off at home."

"Okay," he agreed. "Sounds good to me."

Even though he couldn't think of anything less he wanted to do. He'd rather have figured out how to get back to his life in Boston. He couldn't say *that* aloud though, Eleven would probably think he was crazy and that was saying something, given their childhood.

"Are you okay?" Eleven asked as they drove to the mall in Indianapolis, her voice low so she wouldn't worry the girls or alert them further to their surrogate uncle's strange behavior.

"I'm just a little out of sorts," Mike admitted. "Don't worry about it though, I'll be okay."

Eleven looked like she wanted to press him further but if she didn't it was because of the kids occupying the backseat of their car. He knew she wouldn't drop the subject though and that it would probably come up again when they were alone.

Mike was glad for the extra time, he was a master storyteller. He could come up with something that would convince her everything was just fine. He *would* come up with something that would convince her everything was just fine.

When they got to the mall, he parked the car and got Annie situated in her stroller for Eleven. He dropped them all off at the entrance and glanced at the guide.

"I'll be back before it's time to go," he told his wife after he had located a Borders bookstore.

"Where are you going?" Eleven asked, frowning at him.

"I'm going to pick up some books," Mike said vaguely. "I'll meet you guys at the food court in an hour."

"Mike!" Eleven protested.

"I need to get some stuff for school," Mike lied.

"School?" Eleven repeated. "You already have everything you need! Come on, I was looking forward to spending time with you."

This time, Mike wasn't going to be moved by her big eyes. "It's important. I'll see you in a little bit. I *promise*."

Eleven sighed, relenting even though she didn't want to. She gave him a quick kiss on the cheek and took Leia's hand, leading them all inside.

Once alone, Mike hurried to the bookstore and started to hunt for books about entering other dimensions and how to get out of them. He knew it was possible, knew from the childhood experience of losing Will to the Upside Down but he didn't know how to get out of it himself. This universe wasn't anything like he had heard Jonathan, Will or Nancy describe. Everything looked and felt *normal* and there weren't any monsters chasing him either.

He was in a completely different realm than the one from 1984. He needed different tools than a hazmat suit and a baseball bat if he were going to get home.

He got every book possible on the subject of keeping reality separate from fiction, stacking them in a neat pile so he could bring them to the cash register. He charged his purchases to his credit card and then went to the food court. He ordered a Coke and sat down, spreading the books out in front of him.

He chose one at random and started to read it. He wasn't aware of how much time had gone by until he looked up and saw Eleven looking at him, a worried expression on her face.

"What are you doing, Mike?"

"Um. . ."

She picked up one and read the title aloud. *"Fact or Fantasy? Is this Real Life?"*

"I can explain," Mike said weakly.

"How's this going to help you with teaching science?" Eleven asked.

Mike faltered. He had been so engrossed in finding a way out, he'd forgotten all about coming up with an explanation for Eleven.

"Where's Annie and Leia?" he asked instead.

Eleven sat down and took a sip of his Coke. "Dustin and Max came and picked them up as a surprise. So, it's just the two of us."

"You couldn't have planned it better," Mike said almost sarcastically.

"What's that supposed to mean? I didn't know they were going to come and pick them up! I thought we'd have them for most of the day." Eleven insisted, reaching for his soda again.

"It's cold and flu season," Mike told her as he stopped her hand. "If you want something to drink, I can buy you your own."

Eleven laughed. "When has cold and flu season *ever* stopped us from sharing drinks before? Or anything for that matter."

"I'm a doc—" Mike stopped short, realizing it was probably the wrong thing to say. "I just don't want for either of us to get sick."

"I'm completely healthy!" Eleven replied but she put his Coke down anyways. "So, what's really going on, Mike?"

"I'm thinking about writing a fantasy novel," Mike said, saying the first thing that popped into his head.

Eleven nodded like it was something they discussed on a regular basis. "That explains all the books. It does not explain your behavior these last couple of days."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"You went to bed you on Christmas Eve and woke up somebody I've never met before," Eleven explained. "You don't seem like the boy who rescued me from the rain or like the man I married. You're just. . . *different*," she finished lamely.

"Maybe this is the new me," Mike said, shrugging.

"I hope not," Eleven replied. "The old you always let me share his drinks even if it was cold and flu season."

"That's such a small change!" Mike protested.

"It's a change all the same," Eleven insisted.

Mike sat back in his chair and drummed his fingers on the table. "Hey Eleven, I have a question."

"Yeah?"

"How is it I exactly took over Mr. Clarke's old position at the middle school? I have to be overwhelmingly under qualified for the job. I mean I was going to med school for crying out loud, not getting my degree in education."

Eleven studied for him. "When you came home, you went to community college and got your degree to become a teacher. You said you could always go and finish med school later on if the opportunity came up."

Mike nodded. "Right but I thought for sure Mr. Clarke would still be at Hawkins Middle School. He was always the favorite. What happened?"

"You don't remember?"

"Refresh my memory."

"Mr. Clarke got his Ph.D. and then the offers from Ivy League colleges started to come in. He finally accepted one at MIT," Eleven reminded him. "So, he and his wife moved to Massachusetts."

"Mr. Clarke's at MIT? I never knew—" Mike stopped. "I mean. . . and he got married? How did he manage that and grad school all at the same time?"

"Some people are good multi-taskers," Eleven replied, studying her hands. "Come on Mike. So, you didn't become a pediatrician. You always tell me that you would never trade in what we have for all the degrees and fellowships in the world. We're happy together."

"If I became a doctor, we wouldn't have to stay in Hawkins," Mike said thoughtfully.

"I thought you were going to start writing a novel," Eleven answered, nodding to his array of books covering the table.

"I'm just discussing options."

Eleven reached for his hand. "Mike, are you unhappy here? With me?

Is that what's bothering you?"

Mike shook his head and thought of something to say, the *right* thing to say. "I could never be unhappy with you. Why would you ask something like that?"

Eleven looked away. "Because you came back for me."

TBC. . .

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Author's Note:

I am sorry that I left you with another cliffhanger. The good news is I will be back same time tomorrow with another chapter for you guys and more answers. Feel free to leave me a review and ask questions if you have any. I always try and answer them to the best of my ability.

Until Tomorrow!

Love,

Holly, 12/18/2016

P.S

To everyone wondering, Mike is still in love with El. He just hasn't realized it yet.

6. Chapter 6

Disclaimer: I own nothing.

Thank you again for supporting me. I love you all!

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Chapter 6

The drive home was quiet except for *the Cranberries* cassette Eleven was playing.

Mike was too busy contemplating what Eleven had meant when she said he had come back for her.

What had the Mike in this universe realized that had sent him home to Indiana? To the girl he had loved almost since the moment he had laid eyes on her. Something Eleven had said to him their last day together came floating back through his mind.

I know you've worked hard to get your degree but the letters M.D are just initials.

Even in his real life those words had haunted him. The force of them and what he had sacrificed hadn't hit fully until the day he had earned them and she hadn't been there to watch him graduate.

They'd been broken up by that time, there was nothing left but a trail of *what could have beens* and a gnawing feeling that he was missing out on *something*, on someone.

He had thrown himself into work after that, taking on as much hours as they would give a resident. Sometimes more. But he didn't ever really stop thinking about her. He saw her in girls with expressive brown eyes, their heads shaved from the cancer treatments, looking at him so hopefully that he would save them.

He saw her everywhere.

She had been keeping him company even when he hadn't allowed her

to.

He couldn't do it, couldn't stay in this life where everything was pretend. He bit the inside of his lip so hard it drew blood, but he was still driving down the highway with Eleven in the passenger seat, humming along to *Linger*.

He felt like he was going crazy.

.

"Don't forget we have a party at Lucas's house in an hour," Eleven reminded him as she breezed into their house.

"Do I *have* to go?" Mike asked, trailing after her and closing the door behind them.

"Yes!" Eleven replied. "Unless you want me to call Max and Dustin to tell them that you offered to babysit."

Mike studied her he wasn't ready to spend any more time with Annie and Leia even though relating to kids was his specialty. He didn't like the way Leia could see right through him.

"I'll go and get changed!" he answered, taking the stairs two at a time.

Eleven grinned, her sad mood from before disappearing as she followed him. "That's what I thought!"

"What kind of party is this again?" Mike asked as he rifled through his side of the closet.

"Nothing fancy," Eleven said, taking a long, fir green, velvet skirt off a hanger. "It's just a post-Christmas get together. Drinks and snacks. You guys will probably play a round of D&D, for old time's sake. And maybe compare notes to see who got the better Christmas presents."

"We had everyone over for dessert yesterday afternoon I don't see why they want to spend more time with us!" Mike protested.

"That was so hectic though. Both of our families were there," Eleven replied, taking off sweatshirt and replacing it with one of his

Christmas sweaters. "It's just the couples tonight."

"You still take my clothes?" Mike asked.

"What's yours is mine. We took vows, honey," Eleven joked, pulling her skirt over her jeans. "Besides, it looks good on me and your clothes are way more comfortable than mine will ever be."

"Fair enough," Mike said, remembering how once upon a time ago he had liked it when she stole his clothes.

She looked at him expectantly. "Well?"

"Well?" Mike repeated, realizing she wanted to. "Oh! You look nice."

Eleven sighed. "Nice. There's *that* word again!"

Mike knew he had said the wrong thing again. He used to be more romantic than this, more loving. He had always been quick with a compliment. He didn't understand why it wasn't easier for him.

"I'm sorry," Mike said.

Eleven shook her head. "It's okay. Don't beat yourself up Mike. I'm just going to go and gather up the leftover cookies to bring over to the Sinclair's house."

He came downstairs to the kitchen while she was uniformly placing gingerbread people on a Christmas platter. She looked up when she sensed his presence in the threshold and then started to arrange Italian wedding cookies without saying anything.

"So, you still give me the silent treatment when you're upset with me?" Mike asked.

"I don't want to have a fight before we have to go to the party," Eleven answered.

Mike frowned. "We're fighting?"

Eleven gave him one of her famous death glares, a look she usually only reserved for Lucas or Steve or Chief Hopper when she thought

he was being difficult. He'd never been on the receiving end of it, not even when they had their last awful day together.

"So, we'll talk later then?"

"What are we going to talk about? Medical school again? Your non-existent fantasy novel?"

"I thought you didn't want to fight," Mike said.

"I don't want to fight right now. Before a party," Eleven replied. "I'm storing it up for later.

Mike gulped, frantically trying to recall if they'd ever argued before and how bad it had been if they had. He remembered vaguely they time they had been 16 and given each other the silent treatment for a week over a silly misunderstanding. He couldn't think of anything other times but that one time had been bad enough.

"We have to get going," Eleven told him as she pulled Saran wrap tightly over the plate. She left him to bring the desserts as she went to the closet and retrieved her coat, scarf and hat.

They walked to Lucas's house per her request. It seemed like everybody had moved into their old childhood homes. She walked slightly ahead of him, her head held high. Part of him thought that maybe he should catch up with her and take her hand.

But he didn't, they didn't really belong to each other. Not anymore.

.

"Mike and El are here!" Lucas shouted as he flung the door open and gave them each a hug it was like it had been years since they'd last been together. Not just the night before.

There was so much commotion going on inside, "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" was blasting loudly while Leia encouraged Lucas's son Arnie to make his new remote control truck go faster.

"The doctor says there are *two* of them!" Dustin recounted Max's ultrasound to Will and Lucas's wife, Kiki.

Eleven's face lit up as she handed her coat to Lucas before going over to Max's side. "You didn't tell me you were having twins!"

"We wanted to tell the girls first," Max answered, looking rosier than before.

"Is everything okay with you and El?" Lucas inquired, going right to the punch.

Mike frowned. "What do you mean? Are things okay with me and Eleven?"

"Things have just seemed a little strained right now, that's all," Lucas replied. "Yesterday and now tonight. Dustin said when they picked up the girls at the mall, you weren't even together. You and Eleven are usually joined at the hip. Better than peanut butter and jelly."

"We don't have to be together all the time!" Mike said defensively.

"Are you cheating on El?" Lucas asked, brutally blunt.

"*NO!"* Mike answered hastily. "Who would I cheat on El with?"

"We've all seen the new school nurse," Lucas said helpfully. "She's the hot to Eleven's cute and you're with her 5 days out of the week. It would be easy to stray."

Mike shook his head. "I'm *not* cheating on Eleven! I was just thinking about going back to med school. That's all."

Dustin and Will came over, parking themselves in front of Mike.

Dustin looked at Lucas. "Did you ask him?"

"Yup," Lucas replied, nodding. "He says he's not cheating on Eleven."

"Are you thinking about it?" Dustin asked. "Remember when I was thinking about it last year with my new co-worker when Max and I were having problems? Remember what you said to me?"

"I'm not thinking about cheating!" Mike protested.

"You said Max and the girls was the best thing that ever happened to me and I shouldn't blow it on something meaningless," Dustin reminded him.

"I'm not thinking about cheating!" Mike repeated. "It hasn't even crossed my mind. I've been thinking about going back to medical school, that's *all*!"

"Medical school?" Will said. "Since when are you thinking about going to medical school? This is a new thing!"

"Just because I didn't say it aloud doesn't mean I haven't been thinking about it!"

"Would you take Eleven with you this time?" Will asked, failing to keep the anxiety out of his voice. "She was really messed up the last time you left. She cried for weeks."

Lucas sighed. "Of course he's going to bring El with him. They're married, Will! What kind of question is that? Are you not going to be 27?"

"*Lucas!"* Dustin chided, smiling kindly at Will. "Don't worry if he goes then he'll take her with him."

"*If* El lets him go to med school," Lucas said.

"Eleven wants Mike to succeed and do what he wants with his life," Dustin answered. "If he really wants to go back to school, she'll let him. All she ever wanted to do was go along for the ride."

"It's the way it's always been with you two, almost since the moment you met," Will reminded him.

"Except it was more of Mike at first," Lucas teased, nudging Mike in the ribs. "Remember? El, I love you. I want to marry youuuu!"

"I was not like that!" Mike protested, looking over at Eleven. She was chatting with the other girls, throwing her head back with laughter when Max said something and remembered those early days when they'd first met and everything had been uncertain. "Okay, maybe it was like that. A little bit."

"You guys are special," Dustin said. "Yeah, I married Max but we didn't fall in love for years and years after we met. You two got the fairy tale."

TBC. .

.

Author's Note:

I realize this was a weird place to end things but I was cutting a story that I wrote in one document, not in chapters like I usually do. I hope you'll still leave me feedback! I look forward to hearing from you. We're halfway through! Be back tomorrow with more.

Until Then!

Love,

Holly, 12/19/2016

7. Chapter 7

Disclaimer: I own nothing.

Thank you for your feedback. You guys make me laugh in a good way. Kisses and hugs.

.

Chapter 7

The party ended when Arnie and Leia got into a screaming match after the remote control truck ran out of batteries. Goodnights were quickly bid and everybody went back home.

It had started to snow lightly and Mike was in a hurry to get home and in from the cold but Eleven wanted to linger and watch the white flakes drift to the ground while she caught them on her tongue.

"Come on, El!" Mike urged. "It's cold outside!"

"A little snow never hurt anybody!" Eleven insisted, looking at him. "I really wish you would snap out of it, Michael."

"Or what?" Mike challenged.

"Or I won't talk to you until you do!" Eleven answered.

"We're fighting now?" Mike asked.

"That is completely up to you," Eleven replied as she left him behind for the second time that night.

They went to bed without even saying goodnight to each other. Mike didn't even try to initiate a conversation with her. Even though he still knew her well enough to know that she was hoping he would from the look on her face.

When they got into bed, she turned her back to him, curling up into a ball.

Mike had trouble falling asleep.

.

He finally fell into a troubled sleep in the wee small hours of the morning. He woke up when he heard the radio start to play and the shower go on a couple of hours later. He groaned, when he realized that he was still stuck in Indiana. Still married to Eleven.

He could hear her, singing along with a song he wasn't familiar with and he wondered why she was awake so early. He sighed and got out of bed, padding across the floor to their bathroom. He knocked twice and then went in when she didn't answer him.

He could see her outline through the glass doors and he averted his eyes as he cleared his throat. "Eleven?"

She slid the door open and looked at him, shampoo in her hair. "Yes?"

"What are you doing?"

"I have to run to the hospital, there's an emergency."

"You're a doctor?" Mike asked dumbly.

"A therapist for abused children," Eleven reminded him. "They just got a really bad case in and they need my help. I'll be back as soon as I can though. I hope you understand."

Mike nodded, he did understand. He couldn't tell her that he understood more than he thought about what the him in this life would do to help her.

"Can I make you some coffee?"

"That would actually be wonderful!" Eleven answered, smiling at him before going back into the shower to rinse out her hair. Her next reply was muffled by the sound of water. "Thanks Mike! I appreciate it."

He went downstairs and started the coffee, before putting a blueberry bagel into the toaster for good measure. He felt like he was going

through the motions but he knew he owed it to Eleven to at least do that, especially if they were going to be stuck with each other for the foreseeable future.

Eleven came into the kitchen a little bit later, wearing grey tweed trousers, a black belt, a nude-and-black sweater, and black slip-ons. It was boring and uniform compared to the other things he had seen her in. The only thing that kept it interesting was the multiple piercings that studded both her ears.

She looked surprised. "You made breakfast!"

"It's just a bagel," Mike said. "And coffee."

"It's something though!" Eleven answered earnestly. "It means a lot to me too. But I have to take it to go."

Mike nodded. "Okay. I'll see you when you get home."

"I really am sorry. Especially since I made such a big deal about spending time together yesterday."

"It's an emergency," Mike told her, firmly. "I understand."

She gave him a quick peck on the mouth, something that startled him. He couldn't remember the last time she had kissed him goodbye. He felt his cheeks turn pink and he was rendered speechless.

"I love you Michael Wheeler."

He cleared his throat. "I'll see you later, El," he replied, unable to say *I love you too*.

If she noticed, she gave him a pass as she pulled on her winter coat, grabbed her purse and went out into the cold winter's morning.

He poured himself a cup of black coffee and wandered into the living room. He turned on the Christmas lights and then went to the bookcase. He found a mountain of photo albums and picked up the one on the top of the pile. He needed to fill himself in on a life he didn't know anything about.

He sat down and flipped it open. This was their first summer together after Eleven had returned from the Upside Down. The gang had borrowed a camera from Jonathan and had spent the months between July and August documenting everything from trips to the swimming hole to nights lazing around in the grass, hunting for shooting stars.

It didn't provide any of the answers he was looking for though. He returned it to the bookshelf and took another one. He quickly realized Eleven had them all organized by year, he finally located the one he was looking for, the one from 1990.

There were a few pictures from Thanksgiving break. He remembered those days he could practically feel the distance between them leaping off the page. He'd been the one at fault, planning their break up as they ate mashed potatoes and turkey.

He turned the page, white hot guilt eating away at his chest.

Finally he found what he was looking for. A return ticket home and a picture of him and Eleven clinging to each other. Her face buried in his chest.

"When you got on that plane, I didn't think I'd ever see you again."

Mike looked up and saw Eleven looking at him. He'd been so engrossed in piecing together the past, he hadn't realized she'd come home.

"You're already home?" Mike asked.

Eleven shrugged and sat down next to him. "She wasn't ready to talk. I'll go back later and try again."

"You didn't think I'd come back?" Mike asked, looking at the photo album again.

Eleven shook her head. "No. I thought it was for sure over, that I'd lost the love of my life. And then you came home a week later. You had to withdraw from school and you couldn't get a flight home because of the holiday weekend. But you came back and that meant everything to me. You officially proposed on Christmas Eve and a

week later, we got married."

"A week later?" Mike repeated. "Why so soon?"

Eleven smiled. "Why not?"

"Didn't you want a huge dream wedding?" Mike asked, thinking about all the engaged nurses he'd run into in Boston. Their motto getting married had been *the bigger, the better*. *All eyes on me*.

Eleven laughed. "Oh Mike, I'm not that kind of girl. I didn't care about having a huge dream wedding. All I had ever wanted, all I still want is *you*!"

"So, I came home and we got married," Mike said slowly. "Then we moved into my dad and mom's house."

"That came later," Eleven replied. "After community college and correspondence grad school for me."

Mike hesitated. "What about kids? We've been trying for them, right?"

Eleven nodded. "Yeah. Yeah but it might not be in the cards right now. I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner. I didn't want to ruin Christmas."

Mike wanted to ask her what she meant but he felt like he'd be intruding on something personal. He grasped at straws for something to say but couldn't think of anything that would bring her a shred of comfort.

"It's okay," he finally said.

She sighed as she folded her hands and twisted them together. "I know how much you wanted to be a doctor but you came home for me. If going back to medical school will make you happy, I will go with you. We can have a life together anywhere as long as we're together."

Mike looked at her. "Are you serious?"

"I've always been serious about you," Eleven answered. "Go on and

apply for med school next fall. Let's see what the world holds for you. . . what it holds for *us* outside of Hawkins."

TBC. . .

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Author's Note:

Yeah. So, that happened. I hope you liked this chapter. I can't wait to hear your feedback! I'll be back tomorrow.

Lots of Love,

Holly, 12/20/2016

8. Chapter 8

Disclaimer: I own nothing.

Again, your support for this story astounds me. Thank you all so much for taking a chance on me.

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Chapter 8

It dawned on him later that day, that this Eleven and Mike had an anniversary coming up. She had slipped it into their conversation so casually. But he knew she wasn't doing it underhandedly, trying to get him to do something for her.

She had just been sharing their story.

He didn't know what to do.

He knew he should do something but he wasn't the person Eleven had married 6 years ago. He didn't know if they did anything special or what she even liked anymore. Except for music, because she played it constantly. But she had always loved music it was a Byers kids thing.

"I'm going to Dustin's! I need to talk to him about something important!" Mike called, knowing he had to do something, he wasn't sure he'd be back in his own dimension before the anniversary. "I'll be back before we have dinner!"

"Okay!" Eleven called back. "Love you!"

He waited a beat as he pulled on his coat. "Love you too!" he replied.

.

"Our anniversary is coming up!" Mike said as he burst into the Henderson kitchen.

"Hello to you too, Michael!" Dustin answered as he spooned Kraft

mac & cheese into plastic bowls for Leia and Annie.

"Uncle Mike!" Leia waved.

"Not now, honey. I have to talk to your father!" Mike replied, giving her his best pediatricians smile.

"Hold on, I've got to finish feeding the girls their lunch and then put them down for a nap. We can talk in a few minutes!" Dustin told him.

It was longer than a few minutes though because Annie needed a diaper change and Leia insisted that Uncle Mike read her a story before launching into a very detailed prayer, thanking God for all her blessings.

Finally, Mike and Dustin were by themselves.

"So, what were you saying earlier?" Dustin asked as he started to clean up the kitchen.

"Eleven and I have an anniversary coming up," Mike answered.

"We were all there," Dustin said. "Dude, you love your anniversary. Usually by now, you've pulled Will, Lucas and me into some hair-brained scheme. But you probably forgot it was even coming."

Mike raised an eyebrow. "What makes you say that?"

"Oh come on. Have you *not* noticed the way you've been acting these past few days?" Dustin replied. "It's almost like aliens kidnapped the real Mike and replaced him with *you*."

"You're the culprit!" Mike muttered, remembering what Leia had said a couple days before.

Dustin frowned. "Huh?"

Mike shook his head. "Never mind. So, are you going to help me or not?"

"Of course I'm going to help you," Dustin said. "When do I ever not help you? You're one of my best friends! Come with me, I'm going to

show you something!"

Dustin got a case of recorded VHS cassettes and inserted one into the VCR.

"What are you going to show to me?" Mike asked.

"You usually do something stupid and embarrassing for the anniversary since it's so close to Christmas," Dustin answered, pressing play. "This was last year's gift."

Max was holding a camcorder at Dustin's face. "Say something for the newlyweds, honey."

Lucas huffed off-camera. "They're not newlyweds they've been married for 5 years! 2 more and they might finally be bored with each other."

The camera shook as Max whirled around to look at him. "Shut up Lucas!" she snapped.

Lucas smirked into the camera.

"*Are you guys fooling around with my camcorder?" Jonathan asked as he came up to the group.*

"*Wish the newlyweds a happy anniversary, Jonathan!" Max said.*

"*Give me that!" Jonathan demanded, wrestling it away from her. "This cost a lot of money."*

Max waved him off. "Yeah, yeah!"

Mike came up to them. "Are you guys really fooling around right now?"

Jonathan sighed. "You're the one behind taking my camera, aren't you?"

"*Yes but only because we need to record El's reaction when she gets my gift," Mike answered.*

"*You should have just asked, I would have done it for you!" Jonathan told him.*

Will ran into the room and sat down at the piano. "Eleven's here! Are you

ready Mike?"

Jonathan aimed the camera at him. "Go on and embarrass yourself in front of our sister, Michael."

Eleven giggled as she came in. "What are you talking about, Jonathan? Mike has always been the coolest."

Jonathan snickered. "You won't be saying that in a few minutes."

Mike cleared his throat. "Thanks everybody for coming to help El and I celebrate our anniversary. As you all know 5 years ago this beautiful, smart girl said she'd marry me."

"*Do you have anything to say to your wife on this day that she decided to say I do? Are you happy she decided to marry you?" Dustin asked.*

"*You're my wife," Mike said, looking at Eleven as she giggled again, hating to be the center of attention. "You are my wife. And it is the day we got married. I do have something I have to say to you. And damn, I really hope you like it. Will!"*

"Oh no!" Mike said.

Dustin waved at him and turned up the television. "Shush! This is the *BEST* part!"

"*Many guys have come to you with a line that wasn't true and you passed them by,"*

Mike groaned and covered his face with his hands. Dustin tugged them away and pointed at the screen.

"*Now you're in the center ring and their lines don't mean a thing. Why don't you let me try? Now I don't wear a diamond ring, I don't even have a song to sing. All I know is la la la la means I love you!" Mike pulled Eleven close and danced with her while their guests all awed at them. "The things I'm saying are true!"*

Mike's heart constricted tightly and he felt tears pricking the corners of his eyes as he watched the display of love and adoration play out. It was something that *should* have belonged to him but didn't because

he had been stupid.

"*Happy Anniversary, sweetie!" Mike said, kissing her on the mouth.*

It was something Mike realized he wanted.

"Mike? Is everything okay?" Dustin asked.

Mike rubbed at his eyes. "Yeah. Everything's fine, Dustin. I'm just a little tired, that's all. I'll be okay."

Dustin frowned. "Did I do something to upset you?"

"No!" Mike assured him. "This all has to do with me. I, um, I need to get going. I'll talk to you later. Okay?"

"Sure," Dustin said. "Are you going to go home?"

"Where else would I go?" Mike asked his chest tight. "Don't worry about me, Dustin. Everything's going to be better soon. I promise."

TBC. . .

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Author's Note:

This chapter was *shamelessly* stolen from that scene in the Family Man. If you haven't seen it, I totally recommend you watch it ASAP. I will be back tomorrow with more for you. I am sorry for not posting last night, Wednesdays are dancing nights. I didn't have time in the afternoon or evening to post. But I'm back. Hope you'll tell me what you thought in some capacity. I'll see you tomorrow beautiful people.

Until Next Time!

Love,

Holly, 12/22/2016

9. Chapter 9

Warnings: I say "hell" like once in this chapter.

Disclaimer: I own nothing.

Thank you to everyone!

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Chapter 9

"Let me go!" Eleven demanded as she struggled against Lucas and Dustin. "Come on boys, this isn't funny! Where *the hell* are you taking me!?"

"Ouch!" Dustin whined, glaring at Mike. "She just pinched me. Will you stop laughing and come help?"

Mike came over and pulled Eleven's blindfold off. She glared at him. "Very funny, Michael Wheeler. Having your friends kidnap me! What's the joke, anyways?"

"No joke!" Mike insisted, whipping something out of his back pocket. "Isn't something important going on tomorrow?"

Eleven's eyes widened as she took the two tickets from his hand. "Mike you *didn't*!"

"I did!" Mike answered.

"This is way too expensive!" Eleven protested. "Tickets to New York City!? And right before New Year's Eve!? However did you manage to pull it off? However did you manage to afford it?"

"Don't you worry about it," Mike placated, smiling at his friends. "Thanks for all the help, guys! I can take it from here. We'll see you when we get home!"

"You should have just sung another song," Eleven told him. "Not done all this!"

"Maybe," Mike agreed. "But after the way I've been acting, I didn't think a song was going to cut it this time. Besides, when was the last time you went outside of Indiana?"

"It was the time we took the trip to Disney World in our senior year of high school. And it was a disaster, if I recall correctly. I almost killed a guy after he knocked you down in line and refused to apologize. This might be ten times worse. You've seen Time Square on television."

"Well, we won't go to Time Square then! We'll do whatever you want!" he replied. "Please, let's do this. I won't let anything bad happen, I promise."

"And there he is," Eleven said.

Mike frowned, puzzled. "Who's there? What are you talking about!?"

"The boy I fell in love with," Eleven replied. "Okay, I'll go with you but I don't know what we're going to do about clothes and stuff."

"Already taken care of!" Mike answered. "We can go shopping for clothes when we get to New York City. We can charge it to the credit card. I went over all the bills. It'll be a little tight for a few months but we can make it work."

"Make it work?" Eleven repeated.

"We might not have steak for a while or we'll have to cut back on going out to eat on weekends," Mike clarified.

Eleven shook her head, looking slightly stunned. "That's okay. We don't have to eat steak for a while. I could never cook it that well, anyways."

Mike laughed and took her hand. "Come on, let's go and get checked in. We don't want to miss our flight."

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Eleven was in wide-eyed wonder as she clung to Mike's side as they made their way through JFK. He could tell she was having a hard

time with all the people around her. All these years later and she still didn't do well around crowds or strangers.

"It's okay," Mike assured her gently as he grasped her hand and led her through the throngs to the exit. "I'm right here."

Eleven smiled up at him. "I know. You always are."

He hailed a taxi and helped her in it, narrowly avoiding a pissed off traveler, who gave them the finger even though they were first in line.

"Well, he wasn't very nice!" Eleven observed as she peeked out the window before settling down in her seat.

"He's just in a hurry to get somewhere," Mike assured her. "Don't take it too seriously."

"You never told me you came to New York while you were in med school," Eleven said, looking at him curiously.

"I. . ." Mike trailed off, remembering *this* wasn't his life. Eleven wouldn't have known about the medical conferences he went to as a pediatrician. "I didn't. I read some tour guides at the library the other day."

Eleven nodded, not realizing for a second he was making it up. She'd never read a tour guide in her life, she'd never really wanted to leave Indiana for travel. She said she had all the adventure she needed between the pages of novels and the scenes of a movie.

As the cab started to pull away from the airport, he realized that's why her offer to go with him to med school had been precious. The whole world scared her. But she would have left her comfortable little bubble for *him*. Guilt chewed at his stomach, he hadn't realized how precious her offer had been. How much she had really loved him.

"I'm sorry," he said aloud, without meaning to.

Eleven frowned. "For what?"

"Oh, um, for taking you to New York. I forgot you weren't much of a traveler," Mike stammered. "I guess I didn't think it through well enough."

Eleven smiled and shook her head. "Mike, it's *okay*. If you're going to go back to medical school, I suppose I have to get used to traveling. You're going to try and get back into Tufts? Or some other prestigious medical school, right? And we're going to have to leave Hawkins for you to do that. This is good practice."

"About medical school. . ."

"Oh, so you're thinking about writing a fantasy novel again?" Eleven teased.

"I don't know what I want to do," Mike said.

I don't know how long I'm even going to be here.

"That's okay," Eleven said. "You don't have to have everything figured out. It isn't like we have kids to think about. We still have time to do whatever we want."

Mike grinned. "When was the last time somebody told you that you were wonderful?"

Eleven beamed. "It's been a few weeks," she answered.

"You're wonderful," he told her. "And I think I forgot for a while. But you are. . . you're amazing."

"You're pretty amazing too," Eleven said, taking his hand and resting her head against his shoulder.

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"Are you sure we can afford this?" Eleven asked as she stood in front of the three way mirror at a very expensive store. "I just saw the same dress for a fraction of the price at a discount store in the mall in Indiana."

"I told you, money isn't an object this week. Don't worry about it!"

Mike answered, coming up behind her. "You look fantastic. You deserve it."

Eleven turned around to look at herself sideways. "Where else am I going to wear it though? We don't go out that much in Indiana."

"We might start," Mike said.

"Yeah? *When*?" Eleven challenged, smirking at him.

"Just buy the dress! Okay, El?" Mike replied. "You look great in it! It would be a shame to let it go to waste."

Eleven sighed. "Okay. But you're going to have to do it for me while I wait outside. I can't justify doing it myself."

"Okay," Mike agreed.

She disappeared into the dressing room and handed him the dress through the curtain. A few seconds later, she came out, pulling on her coat. "I'll be outside waiting for you," she told him.

A few seconds later, he came and found her, swinging a fancy bag in his left hand. "For you, my dear," he said, giving it to her. "You're going to need shoes your Doc Martins won't go with this dress."

They spent the rest of the afternoon shopping, Eleven ducking out of various stores so she wouldn't know the total of their purchases because she really didn't want to know that they'd spent more than they could afford.

They checked into their hotel and got ready for dinner and the Broadway show Mike had gotten tickets for.

"I don't feel like myself," Eleven admitted, frowning at herself in the vintage, red cocktail dress she was wearing, it had cost the least amount of money out of anything they had bought but she still felt out of place in it. It was too elegant for her she usually wore loose skirts and her husband's sweaters.

"You still look beautiful," Mike answered.

Eleven turned around. "Did you just say I look *beautiful*?"

Mike nodded. "Did I say the wrong thing again?"

Eleven shook her head and put her arms around his neck. "No. No, you said exactly the *right* thing!" she gave him a quick kiss on the mouth before dashing into the bathroom to get the tights she had forgotten. "How are we for time?"

Mike checked his watch. "You still have time! But only a little. Hurry up!"

"I'm ready!" Eleven answered, coming back out as she tied a choker with a faux mother-of-pearl pendant around her neck.

"Beautiful!" Mike repeated.

She blushed. "Thank you."

He took her hand. "I don't know if I want to take you out anymore."

"Mike! Come on, I want to see *Les Miserables* on stage, not just on PBS!" Eleven said, glaring at him.

"I'm only joking," Mike answered, draping her coat over her shoulders before putting his arm around her. "I can't wait to show everyone in New York how lucky I am!"

Eleven's smile shone brighter than all of Time Square.

TBC. . .

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Author's Note:

Happy Christmas Eve, Eve! Tonight I will be watching *the Family Man* FINALLY!

So, I hope you like the transition that I've made and that it wasn't too fast or anything. Two more chapters left! I hope you're in it until the end. I'm actually adding something to the

last chapter because. . . well, you'll see on Christmas!

Until Tomorrow!

Love,

Holly, 12/23/2016

10. Chapter 10

Disclaimer: I own nothing.

Rated: T

Thank you for the reviews!

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Chapter 10

Even though dinner was scarce because Mike really hadn't done too much research when he'd planned to take her to New York, but *Les Miserables* was worth every penny.

"I'm so hungry," Eleven told Mike as they walked back to their hotel.

"I'm sorry," Mike answered. "It was supposed to be a good place to get something to eat."

"Their servings wouldn't feed dolls, Mike!" Elven said, tugging on his coat sleeve. "How about we stop and get pizza? Or hot dogs?"

"I'm feeling pizza," Mike replied, smiling at her as they stopped in front of a pizza parlor.

"Because it's right here?" Eleven teased.

"Maybe," Mike answered, he looked down at her velvet, ankle strap heels. "Do you really want to trek around New York looking for hot dogs in *those* shoes? It'll kill your feet and we still have to do all the tourist-y things tomorrow. And dinner and dancing too."

"You don't want to do the Time Square thing?"

"Are you kidding?" Mike asked. "There would be so many people. . . I wouldn't want you to get anxious because of the crowds. . . oh, you were joking."

Eleven giggled and nodded as she pulled on him. "Let's get something

to eat. I'm so hungry right now! You know how much I need to eat to be happy."

Mike laughed as he led her into the warm pizza parlor. "Yes. I know this better than anyone else."

They got a slice of pizza each with Cokes, Eleven tried to steal a bite of his because he'd gotten one with toppings as opposed to her plain cheese piece. After a playful tussle, he finally let her have a taste of it.

"Remind me why do you like pineapple on your pizza so much?" Eleven asked, making a face as she swallowed it and tried

"Remind me why you try and taste it even though you don't like Hawaiian pizza." Mike answered.

"Because maybe I'm trying to like it," Eleven replied, nudging him in the ribs. "Or maybe I just like sharing."

"Oh yeah? Fair is fair. Let me try yours!" Mikes said, making a grab for it.

Eleven shielded it from him. "No! It's mine!"

"Oh come on! I let you try mine!" Mike teased. "One tiny bite is all I want, we can share."

Eleven shook her head. "No! It's too important to me!"

Mike gently grabbed her wrist and bit the tip off, smirking at her as he did. "That was too easy. You weren't even trying hard enough!"

Eleven glared at him. "Michael Wheeler, do you want to buy another piece of pizza for me."

"I'll order room service when we get back to the hotel," Mike promised. "Okay?"

"There better be French fries!"

"If they don't have them, I'll make them go out and get some for you,"

Mike said. "How's that sound?"

"I knew I married you for a reason!" Eleven replied, beaming at him.

They walked back to the hotel arm-in-arm.

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Eleven woke *him* up at the crack of dawn the next day.

"Happy Anniversary, Mr. Wheeler," she whispered. "I do have something for you but since we left Indiana in a hurry, I'm afraid it's still hidden under my sweaters."

"You mean my sweaters," Mike teased.

She punched him playfully. "So, what did you get me?"

"You're kidding, right? "

Eleven laughed. "Yes, yes I am. Are you ready for breakfast?"

Mike's eyes widened. "You want to eat some more?"

They had gotten back to the hotel and watched MTV and gorged themselves on junk food, falling asleep in the wee small hours of the morning.

"Yes!" Eleven answered. "Let's go and find a real New York City breakfast."

"Or we could just stay in bed a little longer," Mike suggested. "It's nice and warm under the covers. And the company's nice."

Eleven giggled and leaned over him to get the phone. "I guess we'll just order *more* room service then!"

Mike groaned. "They're going to hate us!"

"It's their job!" Eleven reminded him. "Hello, this is room 300, we were wondering if you could bring us some breakfast. Lots of coffee and bagels. Yeah, we'll take cream cheese. Okay. Thank you!"

"That's not exactly a filling breakfast," Mike pointed out.

"I'd thank you to mind your business, Michael!" Eleven replied, putting the phone back on the receiver and lying back down. She snuggled under the covers and looked at him. "Tell me the story about how we met."

"You know the story," Mike said.

"Yeah but you tell it every year," Eleven reminded him. "Come on, Mike. Please!"

Mike sighed, not exactly sure how the other him told the story. He decided to wing it. "November 6th, 1983. A boy named Will Byers went missing after playing Dungeons and Dragons with his friends. It was the start of very strange. . . what's wrong?" he trailed off. "What's wrong? You don't look happy."

"Skip to the part where we met," Eleven said, grinning at him. "Please."

Mike rolled on his back. "It was raining the night we met and you were not the person I was expecting to find in the woods," he said.

"Because you were looking for Will," Eleven answered. "Did you love me the first moment you saw me?"

Mike paused, had he loved her from the first moment he had seen her? He hadn't ever thought about it before. There had been other things on his mind in those first hours and days they had met. But at the same time, he didn't know a time when he hadn't loved her either.

"Yes," he answered with confidence. "I loved you the first time I saw you."

"Me too," Eleven replied. "Except it took me a little longer to realize it because I didn't know what love was. Not the right kind of love anyways."

"*I want to know what love is. I want you to show me. . .*" Mike sang jokingly, earning him another playful punch in the shoulder.

"Shut up," Eleven said, giggling a little bit, before being interrupted by a knock on the door. "That would be breakfast! Hold on, I'll be right back."

They ate breakfast by the window and then took turns in the bathroom getting ready for their day.

They were out their hotel door and on the streets of New York by 9am. Mike was awestruck by how Eleven could still have a look of wonder even though she was a grown woman. He found it *very* endearing.

Around noon, she started to yawn. She smiled at him. "Do you mind if we go back to the hotel and take a nap before we go out? I don't want to fall asleep before midnight!"

"Sure," Mike answered, taking her hand and hailing a cab.

She dozed off almost as soon as they crawled into bed. He wasn't as lucky, so he watched her sleep instead. He realized he was just as fascinated by her now as he had been when they were younger.

All those years ago when she asked you to take her with you what were you thinking when you said no!? He berated himself mentally.

But he hadn't been thinking.

Eleven shifted closer and rested her head against his shoulder, sighing in contentment. Mike closed his eyes and pretended things could stay the way they were right then forever.

"I have an idea," Eleven said later when she woke up later afternoon, sitting up and wiping traces of mascara away from underneath her eyes. "Why don't we not go out tonight? We could stay here and have supper in the hotel bar then come back here and ring in the New Year by ourselves. It'll still be special with just the two of us. Unless you were looking forward to going out, that is. Were you?"

Mike shook his head. "Staying in sounds good. Just the two of us sounds good," he answered.

TBC. . .

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Author's Note:

Happy Christmas Eve, everybody! I hope you're all having a great day with your family or your friends, if you're with them. I am thinking of you all fondly tonight. If you have the time, I hope you'll leave me a review.

One more chapter and then we'll be done with this journey together. I hope you'll stick around!

Until Tomorrow!

Love,

Holly, 12/24/2016

11. Chapter 11

Disclaimer: I own nothing.

Rated: T

Again, thank you to everyone who came with me on this crazy alternate universe journey. I am so happy you guys took a chance on this.

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Chapter 11

There was only a few more minutes left until the New Year. Eleven was sprawled out on their hotel bed, her bare legs dangling over the edge of the mattress as she drank Coke and watched Dick Clark on ABC.

"You know we could have stayed in Indiana and done this," she pointed out as she adjusted her dress and sat up, sitting cross-legged.

"Yeah but it wouldn't have been as fun," Mike answered from his spot on the chair near

Eleven smiled at him. "It's almost time," she said. "The New Year's almost here. Come on and kiss me."

"It isn't time *yet*!" Mike replied.

Eleven patted the space beside her. "Well, just come and sit with me until it's time then."

Mike sighed and got up, pretending it was a big imposition as he plopped next to her. Eleven wove her arm through his and rested her head on his shoulder, humming contentedly.

The next thing he knew, Dick Clark and the rest of Time Square was counting down to the New Year.

Eleven turned to look at him in the final 10 seconds and she smiled.

"God," Mike breathed, studying the face he knew so well. "Even after all these years I've never stopped loving you, Eleven."

"I hoped you'd say that," she answered, her smile was shining brighter than all of New York when it was lit up at night as she leaned in to give him a kiss. "Happy New Year, Mike."

Mike knew whatever happened afterwards that he wanted *this* to last forever. He pulled her closer and held her tightly, not wanting to let the moment pass without memorizing it for when he wouldn't have it anymore.

Their time together was getting shorter, he still didn't know why he had been dropped in a life where he had stayed with Eleven and married her. What the universe had been trying to tell him. But he realized with sharper clarity than before, he regretted leaving her behind.

He wished he could really go back and change his past.

He didn't know what he was going to do without her, what he had been doing without her up until this point.

Eleven fell asleep on his chest while they were still dressed in their New Year's Eve clothes, a tangle of sheets and limbs. Mike fought off his dreams for as long as he could, wanting to savor every single moment he had left.

But sleep eventually overtook him too.

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When Mike woke up, he was all alone in his apartment in Boston.

He turned over and looked at the alarm clock by his bed, it was only 6am. He realized with a devastating twist around his chest cavity that it was actually Christmas morning and the week he had just spent with Eleven had only been in his dreams.

He buried his face in his pillow and groaned as he tried not to cry. Now that he was awake, he felt the regret of leaving her even more sharply than he had in his dreams. He missed her more than he ever

had in the 5 years they had been apart.

Suddenly, he remembered the message on the machine. He hadn't erased it! He could hear her voice. . . and maybe even talk to her again, if she left anyway for him to get in touch with her.

Mike threw his covers off and practically ran to the living room. He pressed the play button on his answering machine, closing his eyes as her voice came over the speakers.

"Hello Mike, it's me. . . it's been a while." Eleven sighed. "Listen I'm in Boston. I don't know what I'm doing here except I just really wanted to see you again. I'll be at the Boston Common Park on Christmas morning if you want to see me. . . and I really hope you do. I'll be waiting. Or maybe you'll be waiting for me. I just really hope you're there."

Mike swallowed hard and replayed her message, digging his fingernails into the palm of his hand just to make sure he wasn't still dreaming.

Then he went to his room and hurriedly got changed. He was going crazy with anticipation, knowing they were in the same city

.

Eleven was sitting on a park bench, her hands shoved deep in the pockets of her oversized wool coat. It was still early Mike hoped she hadn't been waiting for him long. He took a few steps towards her and then stopped, catching his breath. Most things had changed in his life but even though she hadn't been there for it.

It was like she knew he was there she smiled when he saw him and got up to meet him halfway.

"Hello," she said.

"Hi," Make answered. "It's so funny you're really here."

"Funny?" Eleven repeated. "What are you talking about?"

"I-I had this image of us, of a life we shared. We've been married for

5 years and we're still incredibly in love. We own my childhood house and I sing to you, not all the time but on special occasions." Mike sighed. "I'm a teacher at the old middle school and you're a speech therapist for abused kids. And you always support me, whether it's me wanting to go back to medical school or writing a fantasy novel. I don't know, maybe I dreamed it. Maybe I went to bed one lonely December night and imagined the whole thing. But I've seen what we could be together and I-I choose us. Please tell me it's not too late."

Eleven looked at him, mesmerized by what he was saying. She reached out and took his hand, her fingers cold from Boston's frigid temperature. She shook her head and brushed the hair away from his forehead with her free hand.

"It's not too late," she answered, dropping her hand to his cheek and caressing it gently. "I've waited for you these past 5 years and I would have waited for you longer. Because I love you Mike. I've always loved you. It'll never be too late because of that."

Mike sighed audibly he could feel relief filling him from the roots of his hair to the tips of his toes. He rested his forehead against her's and closed his eyes. She put her arms around his waist and held onto him tightly.

He was never going to let her go again.

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The End

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Author's Note:

Okay, they get married on Christmas day a year later. There's a lot of wooing and groveling and then one day, El shows up in Boston and asks him to marry her. I think that's been done before in a story. . . no copyright intended. Anyways, I hope you liked this last chapter. Tell me what you thought, if you'd like. I'll be back with "things you said" January 2017. So, stay tuned

for that!

I'm wishing you all a very Merry Christmas. I'm so thankful you're in my life! See you next year.

Love,

Holly, 12/25/2016